

November	Few seen coming in over Mthaleb on the 4th. Three were noted at Chadwick Lakes and nine at Ramla.
December 1968	20+ present at Ramla.
January to March	Maximum of 50 present at Ramla and Marsalforn Valley. A pair was noted during the last week of March at Chadwick Lakes.
April	Ten at Ramla and three at Floriana.
June	Four at San Blass, Nadur.

I wish to thank E. Elphick, J. Attard and E. Spiteri Campbell for their help already mentioned in the text. I am also indebted to C. Gauci for helping me in the observations and to V. Vella Muskat, Secretary of the Malta Bird Observatory, for the retrap records.

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A goose hybrid with the head pattern of the Giant Canada Goose

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Received 17th September, 1968

The Anatidae are becoming recognised as a most fruitful source of hybrids, in which the progeny reveal characters which may be foreign to either parent, and these may bear a strong resemblance to some other species within this group. We believe that this arises as a recombination of recessive genes during hybridization, but it can also arise as a variant in certain individuals without there being apparently any question of hybridization. We also believe that these characters when revealed provide evidence of phylogenetic relationship.

This view has been supported by Dr. B. M. Slizynski, who investigated the chromosomes of a Northern Shoveler × European Wigeon (Slizynski 1964) and who subsequently wrote to J.M.H. as follows with regard to variants: "They must result from genes carried latently within a species group, which from some factor or mechanism at present obscure has become phenotypically visible and appears sporadically in individuals in some closely related species in which they are normally latent or suppressed."

Most hybrid examples demonstrating this phenomenon have occurred in the ducks Anatinae, but it also occurs in goose hybrids. The present example

is of a hybrid within the genus *Branta*, in this case between a male Cackling Canada Goose *Branta canadensis minima* and a female Barnacle Goose *B. leucopsis*, bred in 1967 by W. Perowne.



Photo: Pamela Harrison

Branta canadensis minima x *Branta leucopsis*

The photograph of one of the hybrid progeny shows that the bird is basically a typical intermediate hybrid, the black neck of the Canada Goose with the typical white "cut-throat" mark extending on to the upper neck, as in the Barnacle Goose. The mantle feathers are more contrasted than in the Canada Goose, with greyish centres indicative of Barnacle influence.

The character of much interest is the white forehead bar which is also most probably of Barnacle influence. However, Hanson (1965) has shown that a prominent white forehead patch is found in many individuals of most populations of the Giant Canada Goose *Branta canadensis maxima*. It is a very rare variant in other races of the Canada Goose and was not present in the parent bird involved in the cross.

We are grateful to F. W. Perowne for presenting us with this interesting hybrid and to Dr. Pamela Harrison for the photograph.

References:

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